

## *Episode 16*

*Host: Dear viewers, welcome to you again to our program “Questions About Faith”. It is our utmost pleasure to meet you again to answer all your questions. It is our pleasure and our honor to have with us the Reverend Father Zakaria Botros. You are most welcome, Reverend Father.*

Fr. Zakaria: Thank you very much.

*Host: In the previous episode we spoke about the impossibility of the distortion of the Bible and you explained to us what the Bible is, and what the inspiration is, and we also mentioned the verses that confirm the authenticity of the Bible. We had arrived at the verses that claim that there is distortion in the Holy Bible, and now if you don't mind, would you tell us the Quranic verses that state that there is distortion in the Bible.*

Fr. Zakaria: Yes there are at least 4 verses that I will settle for, and I will only mention the rest. In Surah 2 verse 75 “Are you so keen for them to believe for your own sake, while a group of them have already heard God's word, then they tamper with it, once they have studied it and they realize it”. The second verse is from Surah 4 : 46 “Some persons, who are Jews, lift words out of their context” and in Surah 5 verse 13 “they lift words out of their context and have forgotten a portion of what they should have memorized” and in Surah 5 verse 41 “Some of those who are Jews, who are listening for the sake of lying, they lift words out of their context” These

are the 4 Quranic verses that mention ( تحريف ) lifting, distortion or tampering in the Bible.

***Host: In the previous episode you were kind enough to explain to us the first verse. Would you please clarify the second one?***

Fr. Zakaria: Yes, the second verse says... it is in Surah 4, verse 46. Some persons, who are Jews, lift words out of their places and say we have heard and disobeyed and hear without listening or lead us on, twisting their tongues. All these require clarification and so forth.

From the expression "some persons who are Jews" note that it does not say "not include those who are"

***Christians.*** The Christians. ***So here he's talking about the Jews.***

Yes, and by the way, I challenge anyone to find out a single verse claiming that the Christians have distorted their own Bible. I mean in the Quran. Any verse that would attribute distortion to Christians. All verses as we just have seen now, attribute distortion to the Jews. All of the verses. Here, have a look! ***Not even tampering with the vocabulary.*** No. ***It's in the understanding.*** In the understanding. For example: "Are you so keen for them to believe for your sake? while a group of them have already heard God's word", that is the Jews again, and "some persons who are Jews lift words out of their context." Surah 4 verse 46, and in Surah 3, also. Also "those who lift out words out of their context" and in Surah 5 also: "Some of those who are Jews like listening to lies" They're all about Jews, not about Christians, for there is not a single verse in the Quran that claims the Christians have tampered with their Bible. Neither the actual vocabulary nor the meaning. Isn't that right? O.K. In this same statement, distortion is attributed not to all

Jews, only to a group of them: “Some persons who are Jews” and again, “A group of them” so it wasn’t all Jews then and so most of the Jews believe in the correct Bible, the one they had. But some of them were misconstruing it, and misinterpreting it, and according to the verse that says “they lift words out of their context”. Notice the phrase: “their context”. What does “their context” mean? Imam al Baydawi says in his commentary on this verse about “their context”: He says some of those who are Jews “lift the words out of their context”. That is, they twist it away from the context where God had placed them, by construing them as they wish. ***That is, they twisted the meanings?*** In the interpretation, in the understanding of the meaning, not the content itself. The understanding of the meaning, they understood it the way they liked. The honorable Quran has called this “twisting around” as it said “twisting their tongues around” or “lead us on, twisting their tongues around” What does "twisting their tongues around" mean? It means they changed the pronunciation of vocabulary according to their Hebrew tongue. That is, the Bible uses a specific word, so they color it by twisting their tongues around. The Quran itself provided an example in this verse, as it said: “and lead us on, twisting their tongues around”. So they changed the pronunciation of the expression meaning “attend to us” or “look after us” they changed that and said and pronounced it رَعْنَا and what does رَعْنَا mean? “You wicked”, not meaning “attend to us”. No, they turned it into “you wicked” and that’s a swear word. Where are these words found? ***Where?*** In the book of the commentary of the Quran by the Imam Abdullah Youssef Ali, page 200. This book is in English. It’s a translation of the holy Quran into the English

language. On page 200, printed in the U.S. So what they did was turn راعنا with their tongues into رعنة that is instead of saying “attend to us and look after us”, they did what? They cursed him: “you wicked”. So the interpretation here is that the altering did not happen to the words, nor in the text, but in what? In speech. They would utter something that is not exactly what it sounds like. *We’re still in the second verse?* Yes, and Imam Razi – Yes, still in the second verse– let’s hear what Imam Razi says: "A book transmitted by handing down from one generation to another cannot suffer –pay attention- alteration of vocabulary". Cannot suffer from alteration of vocabulary. This is from a book called Duha El Islam ضحى الإسلام page 346 and 358. And the book is who's? Mr. Ahmed Amin’s. This means he denies the accusations of alteration of the vocabulary of the Bible. The words have not been altered. A Muslim would say “they lift the words” meaning they changed the words in the book. They took out whole words. **They changed the word.** They replaced whole pages. No, Al Razi says that alteration of vocabulary is impossible. And in Saheeh El Bukhary it says: “they lift the words out of their context”. That is, they remove it and nobody can remove any vocabulary in the books of God most High. But they construe it in an improper sense.

Host: Please repeat this again father.

Fr. Zakaria: Again?

Host: Yes, please repeat it again.

Fr. Zakaria: Saheeh Al Bukhary: “they lift the words out of their context”. He explains it that they remove it and no one can remove any vocabulary from the books of God most High. Nobody could remove a word from any of the books, they rather construe it in an improper

sense. That is, they misinterpret it and that's the distortion they mentioned. But an alteration in the Biblical text. There is none. Impossible. Nobody could alter anything in the text of God's books. Where then is "we have sent down the reminder and we safeguard it"? Isn't that right?

**Host: What about the third verse?**

Fr. Zakaria: O.K. the third verse comes from Surah 5, verse 13: "God made a covenant with the children of Israel ....". Until it reaches where it says: "they lift words out of their context and have forgotten a portion of what they should have memorized" I have some comments on this bit here. What's the explanation?

Imam Al Razi explains this as follows: "the signification of distortion is to cast false suspicion and corrupt construal, and turning away a word from its true sense to an untrue one by means of verbal tricks, as heretics do nowadays.

**Host: If you please, this still lacks a bit of clarification.**

Fr. Zakaria: Yes of course, he says: "the signification of the word distortion تحريف regarding this verse "they lift the words". On this verse Al Razi says: "the signification of distortion تحريف is to cast false suspicion on the text and corrupt construal or explanations, and driving the word –the word remains the same- but driving it away from its proper sense. **Still it's the meaning, not the word itself.** No, never. That means they understood things in their own way with the meanings that suited their fancy. Isn't that right? And to prove that what Al Razi said is true, we cite the statement in Saheeh of Bukhari. He mentions the same thing as an explanation of verse 15, of the same Surah. It says "people of the book, our messenger has come to you to explain much of

what you have been concealing out of the book”.

Concealing. So the Holy Quran explains the signification of distortion - تحريف as merely concealing parts of the book. It's still there, but what? Hidden away. Right, and that's the meaning of alteration: it's there, but hidden.

***This is a further confirmation that there was no alteration in the Biblical text.*** Of course. Let me quote you now the commentary of Al Jalalayn where you find such an unusual statement. It speaks about distortion. Distortion of the words occurring in the Torah. Look at this particularity. Distortion of the words occurring in the Torah.-He's referring to the distortion mentioned in the Quran regarding the Torah – as related to Mohamed, may God's peace and prayer be upon him. And what they have been concealing out of the book is the commandment they were given in the Torah to follow Mohamed may God's peace and prayer be upon him. He says that, ***a prophesy about Mohamed.*** A prophesy about Mohamed occurs in the Bible and they have concealed it. The prophesy was about the coming prophet, and they confused it to be "the illiterate" (ummi) prophet. Listen how they confused “the coming” and “the ummi” and the truth of the matter is that the disagreement regarding the distortion, according to this verse, is the recitation of the prophesy of Moses occurring in the Torah, about the coming prophet, by which he meant Christ, and that they distorted it as follows: The illiterate prophet. I mean that the Arabs and Mohamed both understood it as the illiterate prophet. Moses spoke about the coming prophet “The Lord will raise for you a prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear” So they said, yes, that's the same as the "illiterate" prophet. Guys! It said

“the coming” He said, No, it says the "illiterate". So who did the distortion? Not the Jews. They are other people, rather, I mean Mohamed. But perhaps someone would ask me: “Who is this coming prophet mentioned by Moses?” Yes, because it says: “The Lord will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren.” meaning from the people of God. *From the people of God*. From the people of Israel. Mohamed was not an Israelite. *No*. Isn't that right? Mohamed is a son of Ishmael, not the son of Israel. Not from Israel. So the verses talking about distortion in the Quran never meant distortion of vocabulary, otherwise it wouldn't have testified to the Bible. It wouldn't have testified to its authenticity.

***Nahed: O.K. Shall we have a look then at the fourth verse?***

Fr. Zakaria: The next one regarding distortion. تحريف It is taken from Surah 5, verse 41. It says “Some of those who are Jews, who are listening for the sake of lying, listening for other folk who do not come to you. They lift words out of their context saying: If you are given this, then take it, while if you are not given it, then watch out”. What does that mean? On page 260 Imam Abdullah Youssef Ali explains this word in his translation of the Quran, I mean, of the meanings of the Quran. This is what he says:

“Many Jews were eager to catch the prophet lying. They kept on asking him then they would tell him: "You lied at that point" or "You lied here." "You have just said something wrong." This never happened. Catch the prophet lying and their ears were open to tales circulating about the prophet, even from folks who don't come to him. For example, people would say: “You know I heard Mohamed saying such and such things,

then they would say, now he is into error again. Yes, but they have never been to Mohamed, and that's what Mohamed meant in the Quran. ***But this is still outside the text of the Bible.*** Outside the Biblical text. You know, the root of the problem is that the objector does not understand, does not want to understand.

Unfortunately, he takes a word and flies with it. It says: "they distort words", then your book is distorted. Here it says "distorted" يحرفون but do you understand what the meaning of distortion تحريف is? Why don't you take the verse, and its words, and its vocabulary and check what your own commentators have said about it in order to know that distortion did not take place in the biblical text, nor in the words of the biblical text but, it was rather a distortion in understanding the biblical text.

***Concealment of the meaning.*** Yes, concealment of things, that's what the Quran meant. ***No textual alteration.*** Right, and this man Abd Allah Youssef Ali عبد الله يوسف علي again explains the phrase "They lift words out of their context", saying the Jews were not faithful to their book for they tampered with its meanings, not its words or text. Who's this? This is Imam Abdullah Youssef Ali. Now we come to the Zamakhshari. Imam the Zamakhshari says: It has been narrated. This is a particularization. It has been narrated that a nobleman from Khaibar committed adultery with a noblewoman from Khaibar. From Khaibar means Jews having been married, that is, each one of them married to another partner. He was married to another woman, and she was married to another man, and they committed adultery. So they ought to be stoned to death, according to the Torah, but they refused. The Jews refused to stone them because of their high birth. So they sent a group of



them to ask the messenger of God about that. They asked him, do we kill this person or not? Do we stone them or not? And they said to this group of people sent to Mohamed: if Mohamed commands you to whip them, that is, only to whip them, accept it. And if he commands you to stone them, do not accept it.

***Nahed: That is they have been previously advised.*** And they sent on the two adulterers along with them, so the prophet commanded them after having investigated the case, to be stoned. But they refused to take Mohamed's words, so he appointed a referee between them and himself. He brought an arbitrator and that was the Jewish Rabbi Ibn Suriya – a Jewish arbitrator who advised they ought to be stoned. And it says at the end of the story that after the testimony of the Jewish Rabbi Ibn Suriya, the prophet commanded them to be stoned, and they were stoned at the gate of the mosque to uphold the sentence of the Torah against them. This is the Zamakhshari saying that. ***Well, we gather a lot of things from this.*** Yes, and thus all commentators concur that the reason this verse has been revealed, that is, “lifting out words” in Surah 5 was this story. The verse was particular to this story, not talking about distortion of the entire Bible but the misrepresentation. They didn't want the guy to be stoned to death, so they misconstrued the meaning of stoning to be "only whipped", but not to be stoned, so the intended distortion is in the misinterpretation of the stoning sentence to only whipping, and not about tampering with Biblical texts, and that's the reason Al Jalalayn said in their commentary: “This verse has been revealed on account of the Jews for two among them have committed adultery. They sued one another before the prophet, who

sentenced them to be stoned. The Torah was brought forth - "Bring the Torah here". They brought it up and it became incumbent on them. It was Mohamed, by the way, who said "Bring up the Torah" and it was incumbent on them to be stoned to death, which angered him with them. Pay close attention here, for it is important. Isn't the citation of Mohamed to the Torah a certain proof of its authenticity? How can he testify? How can he cite a book knowing it has been tampered with? I wonder.

***Host: O.K. then, now we come back to the question, Are there any verses in the Bible that testify that the holy Scriptures have not been distorted? We have now mentioned the Quranic verses testifying to the Bible that it has been revealed and we talked about verses that mentioned distortion, and we have proven the Bible totally innocent of distortion, and now we want the verses in the Bible itself that testify to its own authenticity.***

Fr. Zakaria: This is truly a very important question. Well, we find in the Holy Scriptures among the statements of the Lord Jesus. In Matthew, chapter 24, verse 35, He says: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away." My words will by no means pass away. And in the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 5, verse 18, it says: "For assuredly I say to you" - that's Christ talking - "For assuredly I say to you till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the Law till all is fulfilled." Not one letter. In the previous verse it says: "My words will never pass away", so that was entire words and now here: "not one jot will pass away" and then "not one tittle of My words will pass away." And why is that? Because

there is a warning in the Holy Scriptures – **Yes. A** warning and a punishment for distortion. In the book of Revelation, chapter 22 verses 18 and 19, it says the following: “If anyone adds to these things, if he adds, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book. And if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophesy God shall take away his part and his name from the Book of Life.” So who would dare, who would take away, risking to be taken away? Who would take away anything, and who would add, risking the plagues to be added to him? Is it conceivable for anyone to dare commit such an act? Do you see now?

***Host: I would like to fall back again on the Quran. Is there in the Quran any verses testifying to the authenticity of the Bible and its freedom from distortion? Because it is very important to prove it from their book.***

Fr. Zakaria: It is certain that the Quran testifies in many places that the Holy Scriptures are faultless, and remained intact. Evident testimonies based on clear verses such as: and in order to understand well, we should ask: "would you say (I mean to those claiming distortion did take place). Would you say that this distortion that took place, according to your opinion, happened before Mohamed's time or did it happen after Mohamed's time?" When did it happen? Some would say it happened before Mohamed. Of course, otherwise Mohamed would not have come to set it right.

O.K. So the Bible at the time of Mohamed, according to this opinion, was a distorted book. O.K. Let's have a look then at what the Quran says about it. In Surah 5, verse 47, “We have sent you down the Book with the

truth to confirm what was already there from the previous Book and to safeguard it.”

Host: Would you please explain the word "confirming" (mussadikan)?

Fr Zakaria: Good question. What does "confirming?" (mussadikan) mean? Again, I'm not entitled to explain it myself. Otherwise someone may object, so let's resort to the commentaries: "to confirm what was already there". Commentators concur that God sent down the book with the truth to confirm what was already there from the previous book, that is, it confirms the book that was existent at the time of Mohamed. That is, the Torah and the Injeel. And "safeguarding" means testifying to it. Where is this quotation from? It's from the commentary of Al Jalalayn on this verse, Surah 5 verse 47. Al Jalalayn said so. They say what again? "To confirm what was already there", that is it confirms the book that was existent at the time of Mohamed; the Torah and the Injeel, and testifying to their authenticity. And in Surah 3 verse 3 it says: "He has sent down the Book to you with truth to confirm whatever existed before it. He sent down the Torah and the Gospel in the past as guidance for mankind." It said it's guidance, didn't say it was distorted, but for confirming and guidance. Had it been distorted it would have said, no no no, to disclose the distortion and, no no no, it's not guidance or anything like that. And in Surah 10 verse 37 it says the following: "This Quran was not invented by anyone except God, as a confirmation for what he already has." Confirmation of what he already has? This endorses it. How could they have distorted it then? This was impossible, and by the way, there are 12 other verses, but there is no need to recite them. I will only give the reference.

From the Bible? ***You mean the ones containing the word "confirming" (mussaddikan)?*** Yes. Confirming what he already has. ***Because this has truly been repeated often.*** Yes, Surah 2 verse 41 and 89 and 51 and 57, Surah 4 verse 46, Surah 6 verse 92, Surah 12 verse 111, Surah 35 verse 31, Surah 46 verse 22. O.K. Had the Holy Scriptures been distorted, would all these verses come and concur, and say “confirms what he already has?” and testify to it? You know, moreover, truly the Quran explains that God commands Mohamed and commands the Muslims to fall back on the Holy Scriptures the Torah and the Injeel. So had they been distorted, would he have commanded them to refer to them? And how could he refer them to them? I tell you, Surah 10 verse 94: “If you are in any doubt concerning what we have sent down to you”, but this, of course, is directed to Mohamed. If I doubt the Quran what do I do? How can I be certain? “Then ask those who have read the Book before you.” If you doubt the Quran, ask those who have been reading the Book before you. The Book, of course, is the Bible. What does all that mean? And the Quran commands it, commands Mohamed to be guided by the Holy Bible and copy it, copy the prophets. In Surah 6 verse 90, where it says: “those are the ones to whom we have given the Book along with discretion and prophethood. Such are the ones whom God has guided. So copy their guidance”. So copy their guidance meaning that you should be guided by and follow the guidance of the Bible.

***Host: Yes, are there any more verses?***

Fr. Zakaria: Well, there are, of course. He also commands them to refer to the people of the reminder. In Surah 16: 43: “Before you we have only sent men whom

we have inspired, so ask the people of the reminder if you have not known about explanations and the psalms. If you have no knowledge – ignorant - refer to the people of the reminder. ***The people of the reminder are the people of the Torah and the Injeel.*** Yes, and again, in addition to all this, Mohamed cites the Torah and the Injeel, which were at his time, which proves their authenticity. In Surah 28 he's saying. Look at this verse: "Say bring me a book from God's presence which will be a better guide than either of them so that I may follow it. Say bring me bring a book from God's presence which will be a better guide than either of them so that I may follow it." And in Surah 5 verse 70 "Say people of the book you will not make any point until you keep up the Torah and the Gospel. Had they been tampered with why would he tell them then, to refer to the Torah and the Injeel? Isn't that right? Surah 5 verse 45: "How can they choose you as judge when they have the Torah, which contains God's judgment?"

***Host: Well it's a very long discussion and I can see that the verses are too many, so God's willing, we will resume our discussion in another episode. At the conclusion of our episode I would like to thank you Father, for these clarifications. My dear viewers, I repeat once again: It is our pleasure to receive your questions and if you want a Bible we will mail it to your address. Thank you, till we see you again.***